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emotional and spiritual security



Emotional and Spiritual Security

by

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Introduction

The stereotyped view of a military chaplain is that he is a minister who presides over services in a chapel on an established base; or who, in time of warfare, ministers to the wounded on the battlefield. This picture is no longer accurate, if it ever was. Chaplains of the Air Force are to be found on bases and they do conduct services, but their work also carries them to small, temporary locations ranging from the Arctic Circle to North Africa.

Even the chaplains who remain on one base for a period of time find that their principal work differs from that anticipated during their theological training. They are the first and often the only persons to whom an airman turns when he has family problems or other emotional difficulties. Even on the larger bases where there may be a psychiatrist in the health service, the airman is likely to seek the chaplain as his first resource. At the far-flung bases, there is no other resource except a fellow airman or an officer. A chaplain has the advantage of being neither an authority figure nor a buddy.

Regardless of how it comes about, the statistics are clear that a high percentage of the Air Force chaplains' time is devoted to work with human relations problems of the airmen.

Recognizing that many of the chaplains had not had training for this phase of their work, Major General Charles I. Carpenter, chief of chaplains at that time, requested in 1955 that the Hogg Founda-

tion for Mental Health of The University of Texas initiate a series of seminars in "Counseling on Human Factors for Air Force Personnel." This plan has been continued under the present chief of chaplains, Major General Terence Finnegan.

Dr. Bernice Milburn Moore has served as director of the eight one-month seminars, which have been attended by 241 chaplains. Faculty for these seminars includes, in addition to the Hogg Foundation staff, professors from the behavioral and social sciences at the Main University and at the Medical Branches. Assistance is also drawn from the Home and Family Life Education Division of the Texas Education Agency, from social and health agencies, and from Austin churches and Texas theological seminaries.

see back
Dr. Bernice Milburn Moore

The seminars are scientific and secular rather than theological and are not intended to make professional counselors of ministers. Rather, they are designed to present recent knowledge about the dynamics of human behavior and the emotional factors involved in family relations. Special stress is laid on the need and techniques of referral to specialists.

Built on the training and experience of the thirty men who participate, the seminars are more than a series of lectures. Inventories, case summaries, and other data contributed by the group, help orient the University staff members to the types of problems encountered by chaplains. The methods include lectures, discussions, role-playing, project preparation, and practice and observation in counseling. Library facilities and visual aid materials are explained, demonstrated, and made available.

At the close of each seminar, the participants evaluate the month's experience, giving the leaders clues about revisions. A discussion which is always recommended as a "must" for the succeeding seminar is the one led by Dr. Eugene C. McDanald, Jr., psychiatrist and Director of Training for Psychiatric Residents at the Medical Branch, The University of Texas, in Galveston. Members of the seminar have requested that it be made available in print. Dr. McDanald has given this talk the title, "Emotional and Spiritual Security." In it he acknowledges that much insight about

human relations has been preserved in sacred writings, and he adds his own concern for family life and religion.

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summarily stating the attitudes which one must cultivate in order to achieve some measure of maturity. The burden of Paul's message is that those who desire to move in the direction of emotional and spiritual maturity have the difficult task between infancy and adulthood of developing their inborn ability to love.

The ability to love in a mature way comes from increasing a sense of responsibility to one's self and to others and from being as concerned about the welfare and happiness of the other person as about one's own.

No one arrives at chronological adulthood with the capacity to love fully developed, even though one has had loving parents, dedicated teachers, and staunch friends. Though the ability to love in a mature sense may start developing from the day of one's birth and continue through adulthood, the human situation is such that one's potential for love is seldom fully realized.

IMMATURE USES OF SPEECH

Since everyone has some degree of resistance to assuming responsibility and learning to love, everyone in some measure is immature and insecure. If one feels chronic insecurity, he develops some kind of a façade, behind which he attempts to hide. Yet the methods used to conceal insecurity actually serve to reveal it.

Paul points up in these words the first of the four ways in which immaturity is likely to show:

"Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not love, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal."

Paul is saying in this statement that people tend to cover up anxieties or inability to love with empty chatter, or with lofty and pious speech. Speech as a means of hiding concerns works so well for many that they are not aware of draining off anxiety through talking in which they have little or nothing to say. According to the existential philosophers, modern man speaks glibly and engages in small talk and gossip.¹ He commits himself to making a great deal of noise in order to hide himself from others, and from the stern realities of living. This observation of these philosophers

was confirmed by a group of children who were asked to comment on what it was that they did and did not like about grown-ups.² They said, in substance, that some adults talk too much. They tend to talk down to children and to use sarcasm and ridicule too liberally; all too often they show an inability to listen. These same children added that they liked those adults who listened patiently to their ideas and talked *just the right amount*.

The observations of Paul, the philosophers, and the children are, on the one hand, invitations to everyone to take stock of how much their speech is escapist in nature, and on the other, to note how much is motivated by feelings of respect and consideration toward others, the mainsprings for growth and creativity in any relationship.

An adolescent who recently acquired insight into her need to talk compulsively said, "It's wonderful to be able to talk; it's wonderful to be able to listen; but it's more wonderful to be able to realize that you can be with another person in silence and just be yourself." The ability to talk spontaneously and meaningfully, the ability to listen wholeheartedly, and the capacity to enjoy silence in the spirit of mutuality, bespeak love and creativity in relationship.

IMMATURE USES OF KNOWLEDGE

Paul speaks again, delineating the second type of immaturity:

"And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; . . . and I have not love, I am nothing."

Today's society boasts many people with special knowledge and gifts. Almost everyone has had the pleasure of being around a person whose knowledge and gifts were in the service of love. When with such a person, one relaxes. He feels that he is his best self; listening and responding come easily and naturally. On the contrary, when one is with a person who is knowledgeable or gifted and self-centered, he not only is not his best self, but he experiences a sense of repulsion. This reaction resembles the spontaneous separation observed when two like poles of strong magnets are released

after being forced together. Anyone finds it difficult to be at ease with or to learn from a person who makes a conceited display of knowledge and power. It is even more difficult for one intellectual exhibitionist to tolerate the presence of another. The children who were asked to express opinions about adults said about certain ones—and they were probably referring to the overly-intellectual pretentious type—that they are overbearing and conceited; they are impatient and inflexible; and they lack a sense of humor. On the other hand, these children expressed a liking for adults who do not pretend to know everything. Especially do they like adults who do not take themselves too seriously. The knowledgeable adult who is not self-centered and who does not take himself too seriously can share both his knowledge and his ignorance with others in a constructive way. He inspires a thirst for truth, as well as a basic humility by such sharing. This type of person has been described as being open to life. The person who is open to life has the ability, in real measure, to love and to understand. Those who have not achieved openness and humility may find it hard to discontinue intellectual pretenses and self-centeredness. Yet, if they would dare to give up their pretenses, they might find a new dimension in living: a genuine feeling for other people and an honest regret that it did not develop sooner.

IMMATURE FORMS OF FAITH

A third type of immaturity is described thus by Paul:

“. . . and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not love, I am nothing.”

Faith takes many empty and magical forms, and this discussion about faith will be limited to the type which is tantamount to wishful thinking. Psychiatrists see patients who believe that they are the Christ. These patients express unbounded faith in the rightness and absoluteness of their concepts and actions. Through their faith in the illusion of being Christ, they wish away mountains of despair and inadequacy which they are unable to cope with realistically. Amazingly enough, the thinking of such people differs from those

who live outside of the hospital mainly in degree. For example, most people invest a great deal of faith in certain ideas which, for the sake of mutual politeness, are best referred to as pet illusions—illusions to which one clings for dear life. Some people believe they can get over any serious illness without the help of medical science, not realizing that true science is a manifestation of God's power and love. Others advocate programs which will solve economic problems by making special groups the beneficiaries of tax-exempt government handouts. Such wishful thinking does not provide constructive solutions to the problems of existence. In fact, it complicates the problem as well as the solution. Some existentialists indicate that if one faces the realities of everyday existence, little by little personal and interpersonal realities can be handled in a practical way that makes for genuine security and helps one gain the ability to love. In short, one way to learn to love is by tackling and solving everyday problems. If reality is not faced, one simply remains a wishful thinker and problems continue to multiply, creating the need for more and more wishful thinking.

The children who reported on the weaknesses of adults could have had the wishful thinkers in mind when they noted that certain ones are unreasonable in their expectations and demands of children. They further said that these same adults are disinclined to show genuine interest in children, and to take time to help them with their real problems. Concerning the adults who have both feet on the ground, they observed: "They don't ask you to do things that you can't do in the time that you have. They are never too busy to help you when you need it."

Wishful thinkers who dare to examine their pious illusions about the use of wishful thinking as a problem-solving method may become more realistic about personal problems and the problems and needs of others. The child who is having trouble in arithmetic needs more than someone's good wishes that he can solve a problem. He needs present help in the form of information, stimulation, and inspiration. An adult's willingness to help may be matched by a child's renewed willingness to try.

The child who needs reasonable limits set to his behavior, or the child who is having trouble understanding himself and his chums, needs more than someone's blind faith that he will outgrow his difficulties. He needs to be taken by the hand in the best sense; that is, to be educated by example and provided with necessary information. One cannot give a child such help if his own example and information are not in keeping with the child's needs. If adults have the humility and the courage to make efforts to solve real problems, they may succeed or fail in the process. With such efforts, however, neither they nor the children who identify with them will get into the habit of cultivating wishful thinking as a problem-solving method.

IMMATURE FORMS OF MARTYRDOM

Paul refers to the fourth type of immaturity in the following words:

"And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not love, it profiteth me nothing."

No difficulty is encountered here in recognizing the self-centered martyr who gives, not for the sake of giving, but for the sake of personal gain. The self-centered martyr says, in effect, "Behold me, as I give away my goods," or, "Behold me, as I deliver my body to be burned." The spirit of true philanthropy, or self-sacrifice, is missing. The need for recognition is paramount. The person who martyrs himself and gets the wished-for recognition acts *as if* the recognition is not important. If he martyrs himself without achieving due recognition, he immediately lets the world know he has been let down. He may act as if a dark cloud has settled permanently just above his head. He may be snappish—if he is an old experienced snapper, he may find new ways of snapping, and sometimes this change is refreshing. If he is one of those who cannot find an outlet for his injured feelings or will not permit himself an outlet, he may simply experience the symptoms which, in

this culture, betray the unconscious determination to force recognition at any cost. Such symptoms may include vague bodily aches and pains, chronic tiredness, and an irritability that must be deferred to by all and sundry.

Some people are martyrs to their business, profession, and home. Every person probably falls into the martyr category at some time or another. In craving success and recognition he becomes achievement-oriented rather than interest-oriented. He is more concerned with gaining other-person approval than in earning honest self-approval. He makes efforts that he cannot put his heart into simply because he fears the loss of someone's endorsement of his worth. He is not truly himself. The existentialist says that unless a man can truly invest himself in what he does, he lives with a tragic sense of life. In the spirit of the self-centered martyr, he feels he works hard, endures the unendurable, and yet for all this he protests that life short-changes him in every respect. The children who gave their impressions of adults were probably referring to the martyrs when they pointed up that some adults are gloomy, unfriendly, bad-tempered, intolerant, unfair, and inclined to favor only those who uncritically admire them. These favorites of the martyr are, of course, his scared acquaintances, both young and old. They cater to his demands just to get along with him. Children indicate they prefer adults who do not regiment others to serve their selfish ends. They like adults who do not fuss and fly off the handle or make demands except when there is some reason for it. They feel comfortable and at ease with adults who do not play favorites.

Thus far, Paul has represented four types of immaturity. Immaturity, for Paul, however, is simply part of the road one travels to reach maturity. Immaturity is not to be condemned; it is to be accepted in order to learn just what direction in growth to take next.

PAUL TALKS OF LOVE

Paul evidently took careful note of the road that leads from immaturity to maturity. He named this highway Love. The person who is given to empty or insincere talk, the person who engages in

a pretentious display of knowledge, the person who spins his wheels in blind faith or wishful thinking, the person who tries to gain an advantage by feigning philanthropy—each may find the road to security in Paul's statement about the working of love. Paul says:

"Love suffereth long"—love is patient.

"And is kind"—love is benevolent.

"Love envieth not"—love is not possessive.

"Love vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up"—love is unpretentious.

"Doth not behave itself unseemly"—love is considerate.

"Seeketh not her own"—love is not covetous.

"Is not easily provoked"—love is good-humored.

"Thinketh no evil"—love seeks no unfair advantage.

"Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth"—love is sincere.³

No one can give up the sum total of his immaturity or insecurity. However, each person can transform or transcend in some measure the crippling effects of immaturity by taking to heart Paul's teaching about love in the context of Christ's teaching about how to love one's neighbor. Christ said: "Love thy neighbor as thyself." The import of this teaching is that one cannot love his neighbor unless he loves himself. Nor can he love his neighbor more than he loves himself. If he extends to himself an attitude of love, he can extend the same toward his neighbor. To be more specific, if he is patient and benevolent toward his own personal imperfections, he will probably be patient and benevolent toward his neighbor's shortcomings. If he is sincere, good-humored and unpretentious in what he thinks and says to himself about himself, he will no doubt be sincere, good-humored and unpretentious in what he thinks and says about his neighbor. If he is genuinely considerate of his own welfare and happiness, he is apt to be genuinely considerate of his neighbor's welfare and happiness. If he does not martyr or impose on himself, he is not apt to impose on or exploit his neighbor. If he realizes that one's basic endowments are God-given and not man-made, he will enjoy the development of his neighbor's gifts and talents also.

Martin Buber, the great Jewish philosopher of religion, has said in his own way that one cannot love others more than he loves himself. He says, in effect, that everyone tends to turn himself and others into either objects of exploitation or objects of love.⁴ If he exploits or misuses the other person, it is because he exploits or misuses himself. Buber calls an exploitative relationship an *I-It* relationship. On the other hand, if one loves a person, it is because he loves himself. A loving relationship he calls an *I-Thou* relationship. One can have an *I-It* or an *I-Thou* relationship with God, other persons, with himself and with nature.

Emotional and spiritual maturity is contingent on the development of *I-Thou* relationships. An *I-Thou* relationship with one's self does not mean one is mature; it means that one accepts and loves one's self in spite of being immature. An *I-Thou* relationship with one's fellowmen implies acceptance and love of them, in spite of their immaturities. An *I-Thou* relationship with nature implies a respect for and a proper use of the material things in the universe. An *I-Thou* relationship with God implies acceptance of God's love for each person, in spite of that person's imperfections.

An attitude of love can grow only through the acceptance and creative use of the realities of pleasure and pain, success and failure, as inevitable aspects of the human situation. When the daily insecurities of life are confronted creatively, emotional and spiritual security grows in response to the stimulus of enlarged understanding and a maturing capacity to love.

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